

Summary report on MENA Water World Cafe 2015

Water Security (Group 3)

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Process:

Third working group of MENA World Water Cafe was aimed to discuss water security in MENA region, with special emphasize on local water issues and capacity of local self governments and communities to contribute water security planning. An issue paper provided was highlighted a couple of discussion questions (formalized as expected outcomes), as follows:

- (1) How to encourage local communities to work together?
- (2) How to promote local environmental governance?
- (3) What local communities can do to improve water security?

To encourage the focus on exploring and innovating on themes rather than on problem-solving, the “World Café” methodology was employed. The “World Café” is a structured conversational process intended to facilitate open and intimate discussion, and link ideas within a larger group to access the “collective intelligence” or collective wisdom in the room. Small groups of participants were set around a table and discussed open-ended questions for a structured amount of time. Participants were provided with the background paper and issue paper in advance. Notes were made by facilitator on the board.

Discussion:

1. Initial discussion was evolved about the position and role of MENA countries in reaching water related sustainable development targets. Participants achieved the consensus that MENA countries can contribute to the new water related SDGs through better planning of water resources and water use, and more efficient and effective water management. To that end, participants highlighted the importance of no-regret measures (aquifer recharge management was mentioned as a good example, as well as number of other measures), and public participation and wider involvement of public in the water related decision making.
2. Participants emphasize the important role of water security planning at multiple levels, from trans-boundary, through national level, to local and community level. Water security in MENA countries should further benefit from the breakdown of concrete actions to community level. Thus, local water security planning should be established as

a practice, including the tools and mechanisms needed to encourage local self government in MENA countries to improve local water management procedures.

3. Participants shared the sense that water data availability should be improved in most MENA countries. Moreover, even when data are available, the mechanisms for data sharing often lack, leading to overlapping, or certain limitations in local water planning. To that end, more efforts are needed for the improvement of institutional coherence, including horizontal and especially vertical coordination in planning and implementation of water security measures.
4. Local communities and local self-governments often lack internal capacities in water related issues. There was a consensus among participants that capacities at the community level should be significantly improved, and, accordingly, participants emphasize the role of capacity building activities as important in MENA countries. Wide range of possible capacity building activities was mentioned, starting from measures that target decision makers at all government levels, to on-the-ground activities at the community level. Participants share the opinion that capacity building activities and measures should appreciate indigenous knowledge of local population and should seek for most appropriate methodologies and tools for MENA region. Also, the capacities of self-organizing and indigenous entities (water users' associations were often mentioned) should be strengthened. Moreover, capacity building and water security planning should be used as a mechanism for fostering dialogue and building trust between decision makers at different levels of government.
5. There was a common understanding that water is not properly valued in MENA countries and that transparent valuation of water resources (including policies of water pricing) is needed.
6. Participants also emphasize the importance of natural capital in water planning issues. It was therefore highlighted that the monitoring of water quality at the national level is of crucial importance for further water security in MENA countries.
7. Finally, a discussion about water security as an issue of conflict in MENA region was initiated, with no tangible conclusions.